

Contributed

SPRING.

By George Carrington Moseley.

The bluebird soars at the morning hour,
And the bee is at the bud;
Soft breezes bring from far and near,
Fragrance of field and wood.
Pansies are blooming and buttercups, too,
And lilies fair and violets blue,—
For spring is here

Daisies are waving in the mead,
The grass is green again;
And dandelions are blossoming near,
After the gentle rain.
The little brook ripples merrily,
Singing its song so cheerily,—
For spring is here.

I love the life the spring sun brings,
The birds that sweetly sing;
And all the wondrous world of May,
With its every waking thing.
Oh, the days are happier and brighter, too,
When the grass is green and the skies are blue,
And spring is here.

THE DISCIPLINE OF THE CHURCH.

By Rev. T. E. Converse.

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We were asking a minister the other day about the progress and the prospects of his church. "Excellent," was his reply, "we are growing right along; we expect to receive into the membership tomorrow the general manager of the ——— railroad."

"How can you receive him? Is he not giving orders daily for the desecration of the Sabbath with his trains?"

"Oh, you are far too straightlaced. The Church has far outgrown any such limitations on her membership."

We fear that that pastor told the truth. The Church has far outgrown the maintenance of discipline. Member after member, officer after officer, have made the same report. Except for outbreaching, disgraceful public wickedness, there is little discipline or none. Indeed, in recent years many persons have been admitted to the membership of the Church merely on their momentary impulses, and without making sure of conversion, and, as a consequence, in the Church there are many who care little for the Savior, who habitually neglect his house and concern themselves but little about consistency of life. One pastor remarked in our hearing lately that even some of his elders and deacons fail to give evidence of a change of heart.

God has chosen his Church on earth to be the bride of Christ. Is such a Church as we find here in our midst, fitted to occupy the chair of the bride at the marriage supper of the Lamb? Is such a Church an honor to the Redeemer? Ought the officers of the kingdom on earth to be content to let such a condition continue?

The remedy for this evil is twofold. One is the

preaching of the Gospel. The other is shepherding, or the government of the flock by the rulers of the Church.

The question can be considered in two ways. One is the human standard. What do we think to be wise and right? The other is the divine standard. What does God require of his church officers? We propose to consider only the latter question.

There are three forms of discipline recognized in God's Word:

1. Training to do right.
2. Admonitions to the erring.
3. Censure to the obdurate.

The best illustration of this that we can find is in the dealings of Christ with the twelve disciples. It was marked by the intermingling of these three lines of discipline.

First. Jesus severed the twelve from their common associations with other men that he might train them to a higher standard of personal life. The men of that day taught, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thine enemy." But Jesus taught the twelve, "Love your enemies." John would call down fire from heaven on the village that refused to receive Christ. Jesus replied, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." The child of a Jew was impressed that whatever should enter into the mouth would defile the man. Jesus trained them in the truth that that which proceeds out of the heart defileth the man. The three years of his abiding with them was full of development of personal character.

Secondly. In his dealings with the twelve, Jesus went further and frequently admonished them of their wrong. Just after the transfiguration, the disciples (Mark 9:34) "had disputed among themselves who should be the greatest." Jesus rebuked them with the words, "If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all." Again, at the time of the last Supper, when Jesus told them that they all should be offended because of him, Peter replied: "Although all shall be offended yet will not I." At once Christ put forth this second form of discipline, admonishing him for his rashness. "Verily I say unto thee, That this day even in this night, before the cock crow twice, thou shalt deny me thrice."

Thirdly. If we read the Scriptures aright, Jesus did not hesitate to exercise the third form of discipline, censure on the obdurate even to the exclusion from the privileges of the Church. In the thirteenth chapter of John we read that Jesus began to deal with Judas in the form of admonition. Verse 10, "Ye are clean, but not all." Verse 21, "One of you shall betray me." In Matthew, "He that dippeth with me in the dish, the same shall betray me." "Lord is it I?" "Thou hast said," which means Yes. Judas heeded not the admonitions. Already he had in his pocket the contract of betrayal. He was obdurate and Jesus proceeded with the decree of exclusion, "That thou doest, do quickly." And from that moment Judas remained excluded from discipleship.

So then in the life of Jesus we have an example of the three forms of Church discipline.

(To be continued.)